



**American Hospital
Association**

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August 4, 2006

Patricia Maryland, Ph.D.
Chair
Citizens' Health Care Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 575
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Dr. Maryland:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA) and our 4,800 member hospitals, health care systems and other health care organizations, and our 35,000 individual members, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Citizens' Health Care Working Group's interim recommendations. The Citizens' Health Care Working Group provides an exciting chapter in the nation's debate to reform our health care system. You and your colleagues were part of a unique process and heard directly from the American public about what they want in a health care system. Your findings and recommendations will be instructive to us all as we try to energize discussions on health care system reform. Congratulations to you and your colleagues on the working group for your efforts.

Health care in America is a patchwork quilt, mended together over time to address disparate needs. Addressing issues such as the uninsured, affordability, quality and access requires a broader debate about health care in our nation. The AHA believes that every American deserves access to basic health care services – services that provide the right care, at the right time, in the right place. The AHA's leadership has charted a course to achieve this goal – our *Unified Health Care Policy Project*. The initiative has focused on creating a shared vision of a future health care system and building broad-based support for change. This initiative involved both formal and informal listening sessions with hospital leaders, our communities, and key national stakeholders about their views of our health care "system;" what they like and don't like about the system; and what they believe a vision of a future health care system in America ought to look like.



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Those conversations yielded a consensus vision of a future health care system summarized in 10 principles. America's health care system should:

- Provide affordable coverage for everyone's basic health care needs.
- Provide care equitably to all.
- Be based on the premise that health is a shared responsibility.
- Demand better stewardship of limited resources.
- Be sufficiently financed to meet long-term responsibilities.
- Emphasize wellness and center on preventive and primary care.
- Deliver high quality, evidence-based care.
- Be structured to provide more coordinated continuity of care.
- Be simple and easy to understand and navigate.
- Be transparent in sharing information with consumers and clinicians.

The principles and the six recommendations articulated in the Citizens' Health Care Working Group's Interim Recommendations parallel the AHA's own work on how to reshape and reform our health care system.

We applaud the working group's attention to advocating affordable coverage for all, establishing integrated community health networks, protecting against impoverishment due to major illness or injury, promoting quality of care and efficiency through innovations such as health information technology, rethinking palliative and end-of-life care, and establishing a national process for determining essential health care benefits. Because these recommendations represent the public's voice, they will make a significant contribution in promoting change as the nation debates health care reform.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to make certain the public policy debate on health care includes the principles and recommendations of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. The AHA, like the working group, remains steadfastly committed to health care system reform in America – committed to coverage for all and broader system reform. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me or Molly Collins Offner, senior associate director of policy, at (202) 626-2326 or mcollins@aha.org.

Sincerely,



Rick Pollack

Executive Vice President